

The VOICE of the NATION,

O R,

An humble Address to the High and Honourable Court of PARLIAMENT, for their just Severity to repress the growing Boldness of Atheism and Prophaneness in the Land.



WE cannot but acknowledge with our best thankfulness, your Wise and Godly Care to continue, and firmly to establish the Heavenly blessing of PROTESTANT RELIGION among us, and to strengthen this *English* Monarchy against the pretended Title and the *unwearied* Attempts of the **Papal Tyranny**. A greater danger calls now upon your Zeal towards God, and Love to your Countrey, even to put a stop by your Wisdom and Authority, to the growing Disease of Domineering Atheism, and both *Actual* and *Doctrinal* Blasphemy.

For while you take a godly care that we may continue PROTESTANTS, a Question is moved openly, *Whether we must be CHRISTIANS?* and the grounds of Christianity are (we will not say *Undermined*, but) *boldly battered* with unreasonable Reasons, and the highest Scorn. Whereby your *Holy Design* of asserting the Protestant Religion will be eluded: For the least and the first Evil intended by that Plot of Satan is *Indifference* of RELIGIONS; and the next (which of it self will follow) *Contempt* of all RELIGION.

But in effect it is the old **Papish Plot**; for it is known that the first Task of the *Emissaries* of Rome sent into England is to instil into the minds of Protestants the Principles of Popery; and when these will not take, then the Principles of Atheism. The Zeal of Religion being once taken away, these *Craftsmen* may with little contradiction work their Politick Interest. Which, though it be represented as different from that of Religion, yet it is most evidently true, that the Promoters of Atheism (or they by whom they are acted) are Agents of the *Common Enemy* of England, the Court of Rome.

Such men will not fail to suggest unto you the old Maxim, *Deorum injuriæ Diis cura*, that the injuries offered unto God, must be left to Gods judgment. But you have so much Piety and Wisdom happily matched together, as to see that Gods interest is yours also; and that the Faith, Fear, and Love of God, are the strength of the State, the Cement of Commerce, and the Guardian of Private and Publick Interesses. They that go about to eradicate these Principles out of the minds of the Kings Subjects, are the *Sworn Enemies* of the State, and the greatest *Plagues* of Mankind; therefore to be driven from all Societies, and to be punished as the worst of Malefactors, Enemies to God and Men, and Monsters in Nature.

A Right Reverend Bishop lately promoted to Heaven, a Person in whom we have lost one of the soundest Head-pieces of this Age, in his accurate and seasonable Treatise of the *Principles and Duties of Natural Religion*, after he hath confuted Atheism with mildness, and sanctified solidity, delivereth thus his opinion how *Atheists* ought to be dealt with in a Christian State; and such would have been his Vote in the House of Lords.

98. Whatever Diffutes have been raised concerning the lawfulness of punishing men for their Dissenting Consciences in matter of Religion, yet never any man questioned the lawfulness of punishing men for their Profaneness and Contempt of all Religion. Such men as renounce Conscience, cannot pretend that they suffer for it. And certainly this Vice deserveth upon many accounts the greatest severity of Laws, as being in its own nature destructive of the very Principles of Government, and the peace of all Societies; besides the mischiefs consequent upon it from the Divine Vengeance.

d. The same Wise Prelat addeth an Observation of Seneca, that several Countries appoint several punishments for the Violation of Religion, but every Countrey appointeth some, and it doth not any where escape unpunished. If Pagans took that Order to vindicate *Falſe Religions*, shall we Christians be less diligent to Vindicate the *onely true one*?

His Lordship alledgeth also *Plato de Legibus*, pronouncing that *Atheism* ought to be punished capitally, as of most pernicious consequence to Government. And truly if words of High Treason against the Kings Majesty be punishable with Death by the Laws of our Land, it is very unreasonable that words of High Treason against Gods infinite Majesty should scape unpunished, for want of Laws to repress the Offenders. That *Essential Want*, addeth much to the Boldness of such Offenders: For if there be any Statutes against Blasphemy, they are looked upon as antiquated. And though the offence be Vulgar, yet none (God forgive us) is indicted for it at any Affizes or Sessions, there being no encouragement for the Delator.

d. Yet the abuse of Religion ought to be looked upon as a common Injury, and every man is concerned to endeavour a Vindication of it, saith the same Religious and Prudent Bishop: And he brings in for it a Rule in the Civil Law, *Religio contaminata ad omnium pertinet injuriam*. If every man is concerned in it, much more a Politick Body.

And since your Wisdom is sufficiently satisfied that the Scandal is general, and that this Expostulation is the Voice of every Person in this Land that hath any Piety in his heart, or any tenderness for the *Publick Preservation*, We crave and expect of you, Noble PEERS and Worthy PATRIOTS, our Vindication of that *Common Injury*, and Defence against the daily danger of so many of us, who (as much as the spiritual danger is more pernicious then the temporal) have more ground then *David* to say, *Our soul is among Lions, and we lie among them that are set on fire, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword*. Men that set their mouth against Heaven, and with a masterful impudence affirm that there is none to behold or judge them, cast contempt upon the Holy Scripture, the Saints mentioned in it, and the very Person of JESUS CHRIST God blessed for evermore. Men that bear themselves as the *Kings of Wit* among a company of *Fools*; esteeming them no better than their own Piety and Religion.

And when pious rational men, that will not be over-awed by their peremptoriness, offer to teach them better, they will be sure to put them out of that Discourse too serious for them, with their studied Common-places of Buffonry against Godliness and Conscience. But thereby they be far from winning their godly Opposers, they stun them with horror, and leave their memory stuffed and stained (against their will) with their pestiferous communication.

Such men have no ground to say, that before we call upon Authority to restrain and punish them, they ought to be convinced of the Error, for so they have been already, as much as could be done with Learning, Piety, and sound Reason. And so much good hath the Wickedness done, that it hath given occasion to excellent Books, and powerful pithy Sermons to that purpose; several of which have been Printed by his Majesties Command. And it hath put a necessity upon our Religious Clergy to bend their Studies to the defeating of that *Hellish Conspiracy*, which attempteth to break the Banks of Conscience and Religion, that *Vice* may have its full Scope in the World.

But hitherto these holy and rational endeavours have done no other effect (for any thing we see) towards the vitious Atheists, but to make them more proud and insulting; without any respect of the Laws of God and Men. We may praise God that the late godly endeavours against *Atheism* have powerfully settled the tempted Christians in their most holy Faith. But Divines may Write and Preach their heart out, yet men whose God is their Belly and their Lust, will speak and do what they list.

Since then such pestilent persons are not to be confuted but by Authority, we humbly crave that Confutation at your hands, as your Wisdom shall think most fit; justly fearing, that if we neglect to put a timely stop to that ranging Pestilence, the wrath of our jealous God will break upon us, for not fighting against those that fight against him.

Rom. 15. 5.

Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.